

THE ART OF
MARTIN BAER
GEORGE BAER

MR. A. R. JONES

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The art of Martin Baer George
Baer

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THE ART OF
MARTIN BAER
GEORGE BAER

APPRECIATIONS BY

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PIERRE VERY

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THE BAER BROTHERS IN THE INTERNATIONAL EYE

BY C. J. BULLIET

EQUALLY AT HOME in Munich, Paris, North Africa, and their native Chicago, Martin and George Baer have attained an international outlook and ease in painting, difficult apparently, for our American artists to achieve.

Paris is the mighty maelstrom toward which the artists of all the world have gravitated for the past century. The Spaniard, Picasso, becomes as much a Parisian as the Frenchman Matisse, and so does the Italian, Modigliani, and the Dutchman, Van Gogh. The English do not readily assimilate, nor do Americans—for instance, Whistler and Sargent. They participate without becoming integrally a part.

Martin and George Baer are violating the rule. Associated with the group that looked to the late Modigliani for leadership, these two Chicago young men have caught the international spirit—the spirit that makes contemporary Parisian art the brilliant manifestation of world achievement.

The Baer brothers have evolved something that is recognized in France and America as distinctively “Baer.” It is easy to trace their idols and enthusiasms—Cezanne, El Greco, Cranach, and more lately, Kokoschka. Traces of them all can be discovered in their canvases.

But all such influences are offset by the "Baer" motif—the something that is distinctively their own, that springs out of their inner consciousness and is readily recognizable in everything they paint.

Important galleries like the Paris establishment of Durand-Ruel and the Galerie Jeune Peinture, have thought so well of this "Baer" manifestation as to stage exhibitions of their work.

The Baers are the sons of Leopold Baer of Chicago, and it was his faith in them that enabled them to study in the best ateliers of Munich and Paris, and later plunge into the outskirts of the Sahara desert in North Africa, where they did the first series of paintings that brought them into the international eye. It was these canvases that Durand-Ruel exhibited in the spring of 1926, and that were brought later to America, and shown at the Art Institute of Chicago.

Nearly everything the brothers had painted were sold in these two shows, and with the proceeds they went back to the Sahara desert, where they did a second series, accepted by the Galerie Jeune Peinture, Paris, for exhibition in May, 1928, and later brought to America for a trans-continental tour.

The brothers found the Algerians as much to their artistic liking as Gauguin found the Tahitians. They looked upon them with a lively, leavening curiosity, and transferred them quivering to their canvases—the dancing girls, swaying to barbaric music; the camel drivers, ready

to start for their long journeys across the Sahara; street vendors, beggars, women of the African demi-monde, and even exalted ladies of the Moslem aristocracy. Often they had to use much tact to secure their models, owing to Mohammed's prohibition, still respected if not always obeyed, against the portraying of the human face and body—an offshoot of the old Mosaic commandment against the making of "graven images."

The Baers had their early training in "Impressionism," and their work in Munich was expert in the method of the reigning "academy." It was after they went to Paris and became associated with the young group around Modigliani that they sensed the new freedom. Their German ancestry and their Munich training had given them a Germanic background which they have been wise in not wholly sacrificing—in their work persists the idolatry for Cranach, and when they came only recently to see the light as manifested in Kokoschka, this German strain was found to fit.

Still in the early enthusiasm of youth, these brothers give promise of great things. Already their achievement has been notable, and it is gratifying to observe a marked improvement in the 1928 canvases over those of 1926—a loosening up of their technique, and a greater spontaneity in spirit.

The Baers are remarkable in their artistic twinship. Constantly together, they react on each other, and their painting shows twin progress. They resemble, in this respect, those literary brothers, the Goncourts.

BY CHARLES FEGDAL, *Paris, France*

DEVOTED TO THE same field of research and both pursuing an identic artistic ideal, Martin and George Baer are inevitably conjoined in our thought and in our study of their singular productions.

When I saw their paintings, some two years ago, I was immediately impressed by their originality, force, and finesse. They were specially marked by the expressionist influence, and its more profound understandings, a tendency traceable, perhaps, to a loyal admiration for the great Delacroix.

But, besides, their canvases gave us a kind of new and thrilling contrast between the gaiety of their coloring as such and their peculiarly melancholy character, a sadness of hushed harmonies, a sense of something muted, throttled, "étouffé."

But George and Martin Baer, despite their successes at the Galerie Durand-Ruel and at the Galerie Jeune Peinture, were still experimenters, questing farther goals with eagerness, tenacity and a confidence at once firm and teachable.

Ah, how difficult it is for Man, the lord of creation, to be truly humble in confronting Nature; to observe her, to contemplate her moods, and to love her for herself, banishing all pride of dominion and domination. Yet, if one can attain this state of simplicity and serenity, then the more than human—the supernal—truth that is in Mother Earth reveals itself, reflects in that corner of the canvas that springs to life, the so familiar gesture, the vibrations

of tremulous light, the very continuity of movement, the vagrant stir of air.

Animated by this truth-seeking spirit, George and Martin Baer came at length to understand that painting is first of all an art of joy; that even a macabre scene, though sad in theme, may be rendered with pictorial vivacity and inner happiness.

Accordingly, little by little the palette of the Baers, without itself changing, transformed the aspect of their works. Not a revolution, but an evolution. They give now to their canvases, whatever the given situation, the object, the figure or landscape, an atmosphere which communicates a palpitating vitality, they have learned to put there something better than a mind wounded or restless, they begin to bring to it a steadfast soul.

A true work of art must ever serve as a window giving the beholder an outlook upon an imaginary world, the "Réve." This dream world is only possible for the spectator if the artist creates in him a real emotion, gives him a portion of his own heart. And it is thus that those earnest painters, the brothers Baer, out of the pangs of their creative labor, come to communicate at last to their pictures a vital spark which will grow ever more heart-warming and luminous, because it is one with that "divine fire" common to all veritable artists the world over—the sincere humility of the lover of life.

CHARLES FEGDAL, *Paris, 1928*

*Translated from French
by Jeanne S. de LaBarthe*

GEORGES RÉMON, *Paris, France*

AS ONE who for many years has followed the brothers Baer with an interest which has never wavered, I consider it a great privilege and pleasure to write this little chapter, which I shall title—"George and Martin Baer, 1928."

And, now that I am about to summarize, George and Martin, what I think of your paintings that you are carrying away from France to America, I cannot help but think, with a queer insistence, of that distant day when, at the time of your first exhibition in Paris, (at Durand-Ruel) I was confronted with the work—double and yet so unified!—the most unexpected that one could imagine.

As you may see, I have kept a perfect vision of it. And it is entirely probable that if I had to write about it again, I would do so in the same way, using the very same terms.

At any rate, I still keep a vivid remembrance of my marveling surprise in viewing those pages, rugged sometimes to the point of rudeness, and again to the contrary, wonderfully harmonious, where you praise this Northern Africa that so few Frenchmen know, not suspecting the male magnitude and portentous majesty of those Moroccan scenes and of the South of Algeria, nor the delicious lyricism that you have discovered there after so many repeated and extended sojourns.

What caprice of destiny, what surprising inhumanity, or rather what inexplicable attraction lead you to those hills rocky and burnt, and these precarious oases which

no one before you has described with so much picturesqueness and poetry?

With what a wonderful tenderness have you surrounded the natives, whom you have made your familiar models and your friends, types of Arabs and of Berberes, strongly accentuated, but always astonishing in their verity. No one among our best orientalist has felt and seen as have you, what unreality the skies of these countries contribute so often by reason of their starved and suffocating air.

You make us wonder then what a Gustav Moreau would have painted in those regions, providing their savage aspect did not shock him.

And what you expounded at that time showed such clearness of lines, such a frankness of inspiration, that one could almost wish that there your effort had stopped. The critic found there already such extensive and rich material that he could dilate endlessly upon the charms of your exciting discoveries.

Add to this the wonderful meeting of your two brotherly geniuses, so much alike in their modes of expression that, though experts studied carefully your canvases, as though comparing the paintings, say, of two primitives, wise would be the one who could not be caught—confusing the work of one with the other.

Since then you have varied and broadened your style, you have on both sides of the Atlantic carried away wonderful honors. But till lately, it seems to me that you tried to modify deeply neither your vision nor your general

method, limiting yourself only to acquiring new qualities of execution, a palette always more rare and more personal.

Then at length of a certainty, and for each one of you, came the decisive moment that occurs in the career of every painter in love with his art, when, trying to get away from his too familiar self, aspiring to explore regions wider and less known, he imposes brusquely upon himself the most severe discipline in order to affirm himself better.

Another observation which will strike those who know you as well as I do: now, without being able to remark between you the least disagreement, for the first time you are taking entirely different roads.

Your latest creations betray the same anxiety, the reason for which is not hard to seek.

Both of you, without claiming any school in particular, without yielding to any easy modes or to factional influences which rule passionately in our cosmopolitan Paris—both of you have felt the charms and the magic spells of the luminous skies of France. Whereupon your palettes became more vibrating and more “chatoyante.”

Whither will you be led by those researches of which I perceive the stirring sincerity and of which I guess the splendid promises?

You will not be the first ones to whom our country will have given the graceful gift of its sumptuous vision, and if, as everything leads me to hope, you keep this romanticism ardent and ingenious which so seduced us in your youthful productions, while adding to it your precious

gifts as mature colorists, you will have accomplished what has become very rare at this time—a work of a large and splendid understanding.

GEORGES RÉMON

*Attaché a la conservation des
musées Galliera et Carnavalet*

*Translated from French
by Jeanne S. de LaBarthe*



PIERRE VERY, *Paris, France*

I WILL RECALL how I renewed acquaintance with the brothers Baer. It happened this time in the narrow street Jacques-Callot, formerly so somber but now blossoming with art. Passing the window of that small but valiant gallery of the "Jeune Peinture," the "Tisserand de Corbeilles," wrought by George Baer, halted my attention.

In August, 1926, the two brothers had exhibited about fifty paintings at the Durand-Ruel Gallery in Paris. These were the fruit of many years of consistent effort expended in Africa. In "l'homme Libre," Monsieur Tremeur had then expressed a very high esteem for the work of these two artists.

Said he: "It will not be long until these two men, fully armed in point of technical command and possessing a clear vision of their potentialities and objectives, will be ranked among the best painters."

Time has proven Tremeur a true prophet. The hour of mastery for the brothers Baer is no longer a matter of remote speculation or of promise only. For, in a number of canvases, particularly in the "Chleux" and the "Place des Chameaux," those two outstanding features of the exhibition, may we not say that they have already touched the heights?

Clearly, it has not been in vain that those two Americans, whom an imperious call summoned from normal occupations and tore from their family circle, have followed

the beckoning of the mirages of ancient and yet young Africa.

Like that woman of whom Louis Bertrand speaks, they were fated ever to turn back, spell-bound, as they would retreat across the frontier of sands.

Such is the sorcery of the lands of the sun; whoever has once hearkened to their incantation shall never henceforth escape their enchantment.

And now George and Martin Baer have again visited us. We have before us their second exhibition. It shows talents which have gained notably in dignity and sheer power.

Let another speak understandingly of the luminous quality, the thematic richness of this painting, let him praise this happy wedding of inter-playing light and shadow, and this assured technique with which the Baers dispose the elements of their pictures so as to establish a subtle hierarchy. Critic of art, I hear your conclusion; I applaud it. The brothers Baer of yesteryear and today, have convinced us abundantly and beyond dispute, that they have in them the qualities of real masters: standing before some of their canvases which would honor a museum, the word "chef-d'oeuvre" comes naturally to our lips.

But those few words said, have we said enough? The conventional critic visits the current exhibitions, runs his eye along walls more or less happily decorated, passing quickly here, there stopping to meditate a moment; then hurriedly back home, rushing to put his impressions into print whilst they are still news of the day—will the hack-

neyed phrases that come to him thus hastily suffice always to express what he has felt? Poor words, dull, cold and dry, like so many insects.

"Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se repondent." Yes, the perfumes, colors and sounds find a common language. Many times, before knowing the famous verse, and very often since, I have thought that between one's soul and the memory of a stirring picture, music is undoubtedly the best interlocutor. Landscape, torrid or frozen, stormy or somnolent, exuberant tropical vision, or dark sky of "Ile de France," there is not an aspect of the world indeed that music cannot reconstitute for our inner sense. Whether for sorrow or joy, the sounds and the colors, I verily believe, wield the same incomparable power over our shadowy world of dreams. "Fatma," "La Danse du Sang," "L'entree du Khalifat du Pacha Sidi Tazi," "Chez les Chleux," "Sous la tente." What harmonics will be attuned to recall those episodes of a legendary land and life? Strumming of the Dherbouka—thin sound of the flutes, and that unappeasable metallic tinkling of the anklets of the women. . . . All the wild imaginings of our fantastic childhood flood back to us, to tell us again they did not lie.

In 1926, Tremeur found in Baer's works a resurgence of Giotto, of Tintoretto, of Greco. Ah! Monsieur Tremeur, it is with delight that I say to you today, the Baers are the Baers simply—fraternal as to their technique, but different and wholly individual as to the soul.

Yet, whether we speak of Martin, the more preoccupied

with passion, or of George, who seems to apply himself in his impassiveness and his ruses to report the character of a fatalist race, in contradistinction to the former, who delineates rather the universal heart, throughout the work of the two brothers it is always Africa that is expounded—moreover, it is always the South such as our dreams have limned it. Let us not defend ourselves. Let us yield to the magic which entices us. Let us allow the seas to mix, the continents to wander where they list. Transported with the speed of the lightning, as by some flying carpet, let us course back to those happy times when our tender years were satisfied with geographic notions the most confused.

All the gold, all the blood, all the garish and gorgeous colors of Arabia, these Baers, merchants in magic, pour out for us from their treasure box.

Have we been asleep and are we still dreaming? Are we in the palace of Haroun al Raschid, or in the cave of Ali Baba? In those cool rooms lighted only by the pompous hues of stained windows, where are aligned those thousands and thousands of vases, miraculously upturned of a sudden, shall we see coming out thieves or princesses?

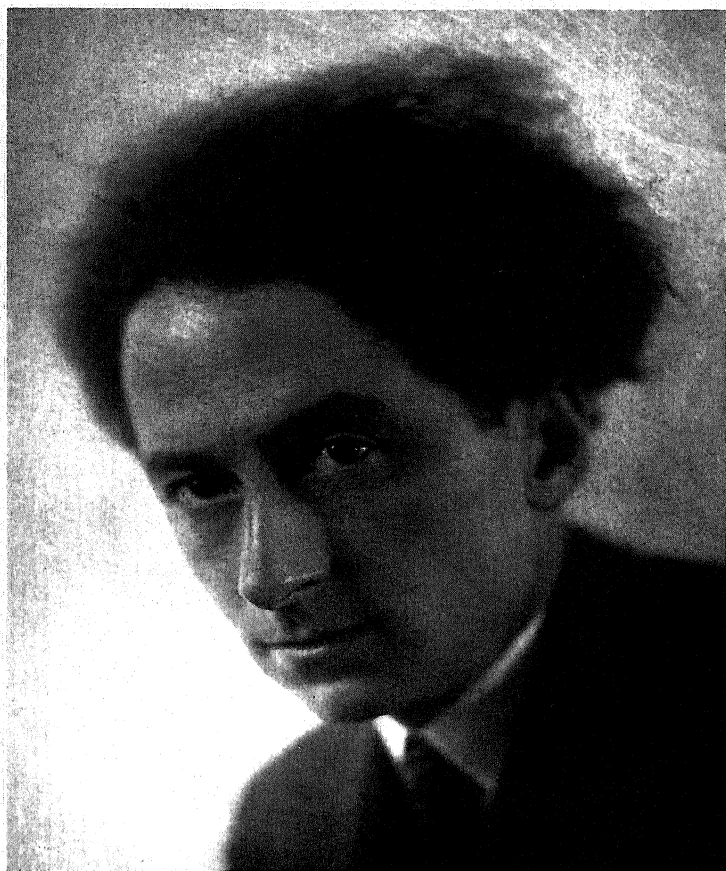
Studying the least developed of the Baer canvases, no less than in confronting the most finished—whether we behold this encampment of nomads resigned and tricky, painted by George, or this “Place des Chameaux,” or be it that picture of Martin, charged with sensuousness and with melancholy, with its graceful image of a young girl in the foreground, we recognize always Africa, Arabia,

Persia. In a word, the Orient! (O word of Poetry! The Orient of the heart) and we listen—may we not almost hear it? We listen to the voice hollow and mysterious which calls.

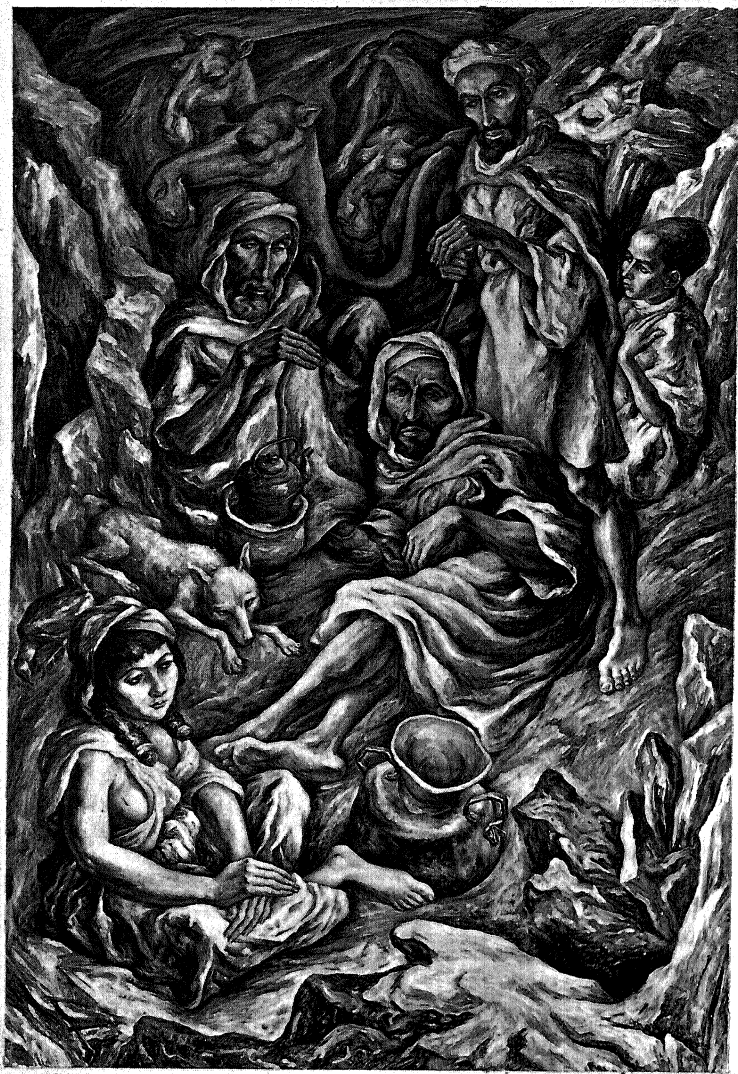
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*Translated from French
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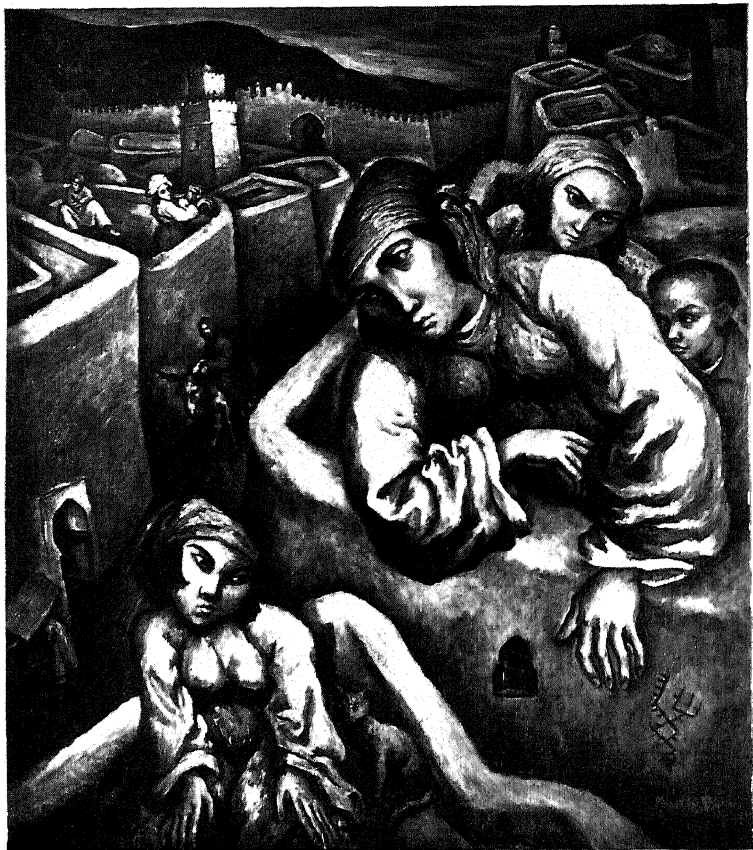
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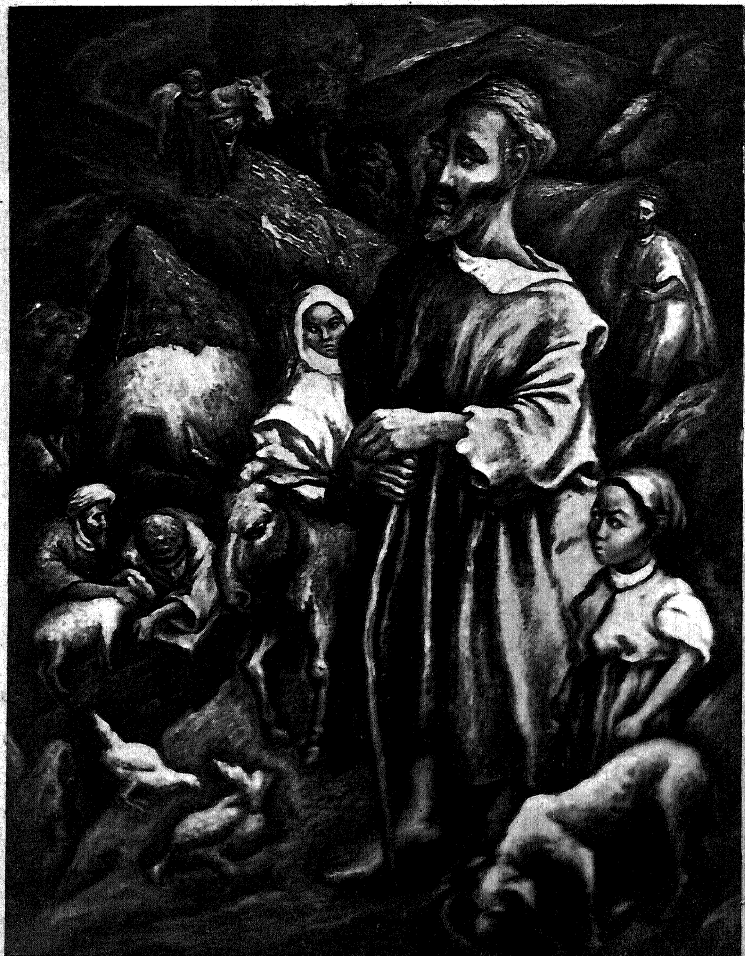


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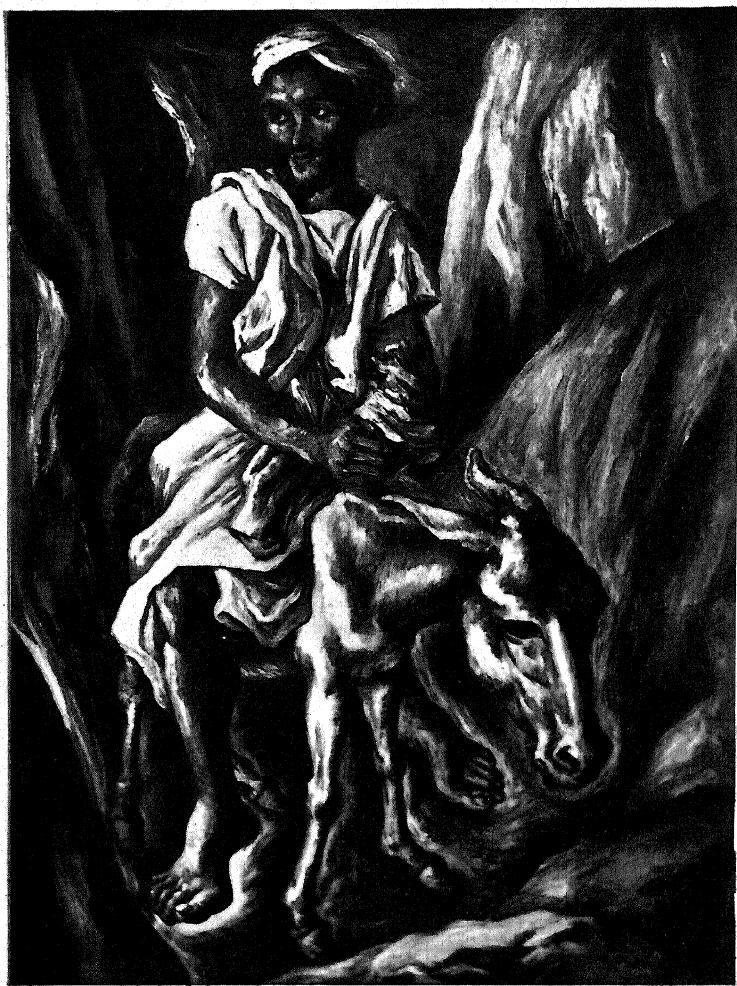


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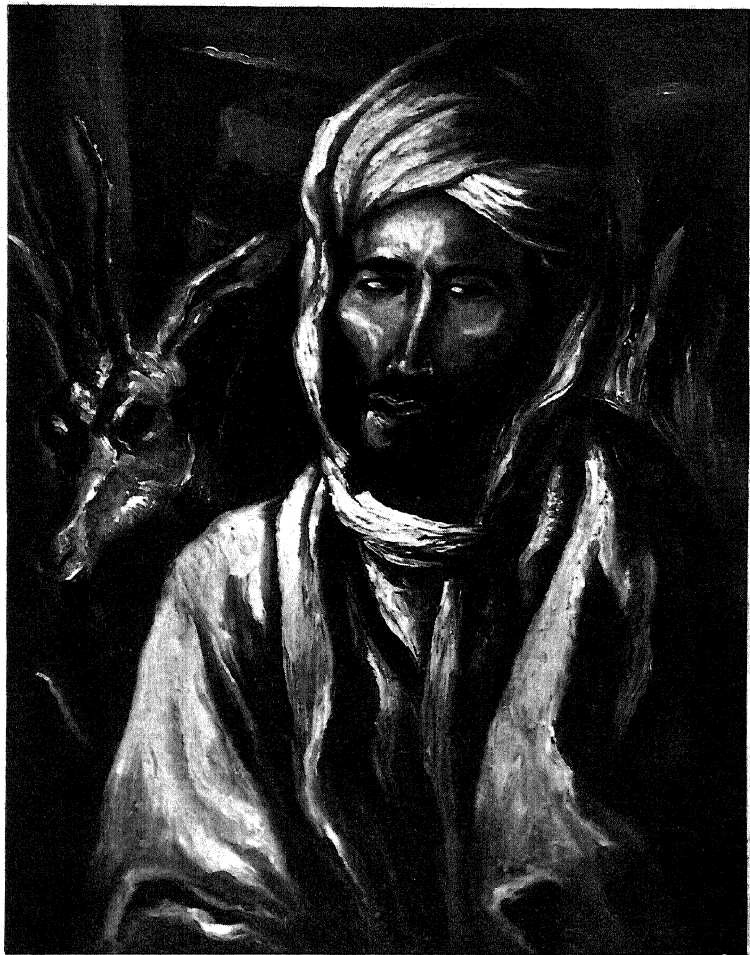
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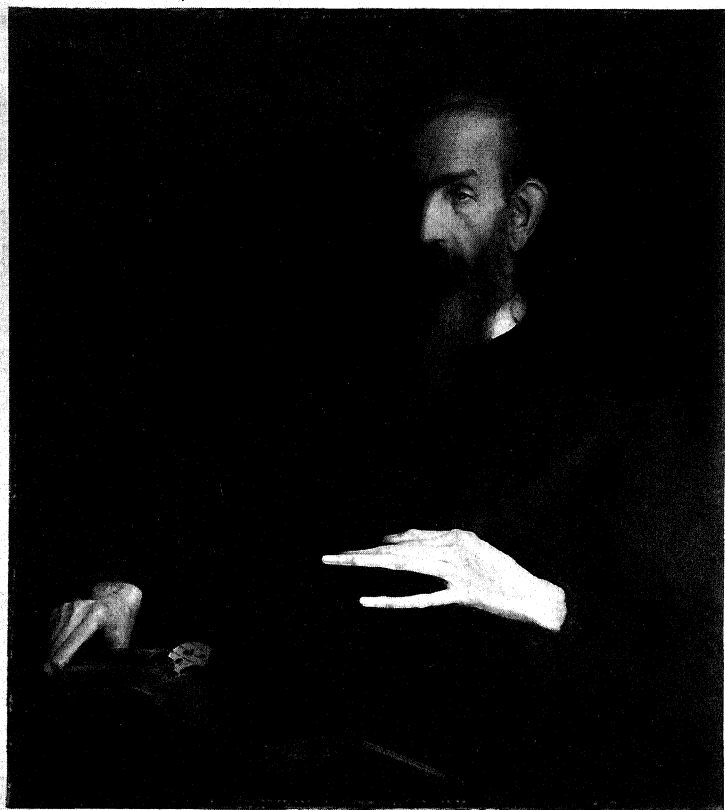
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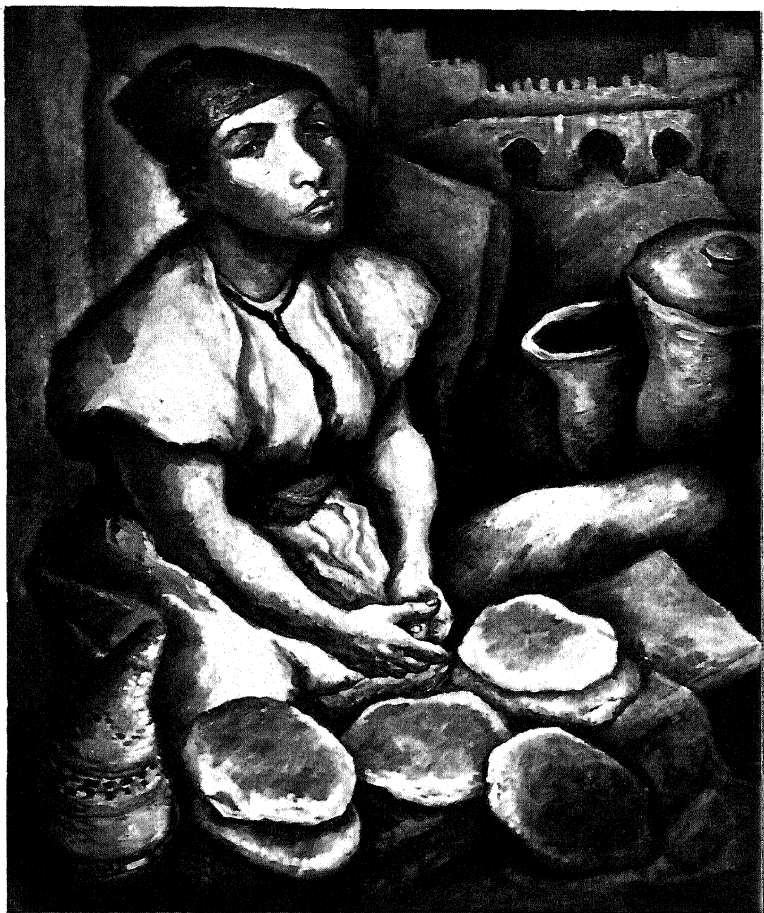


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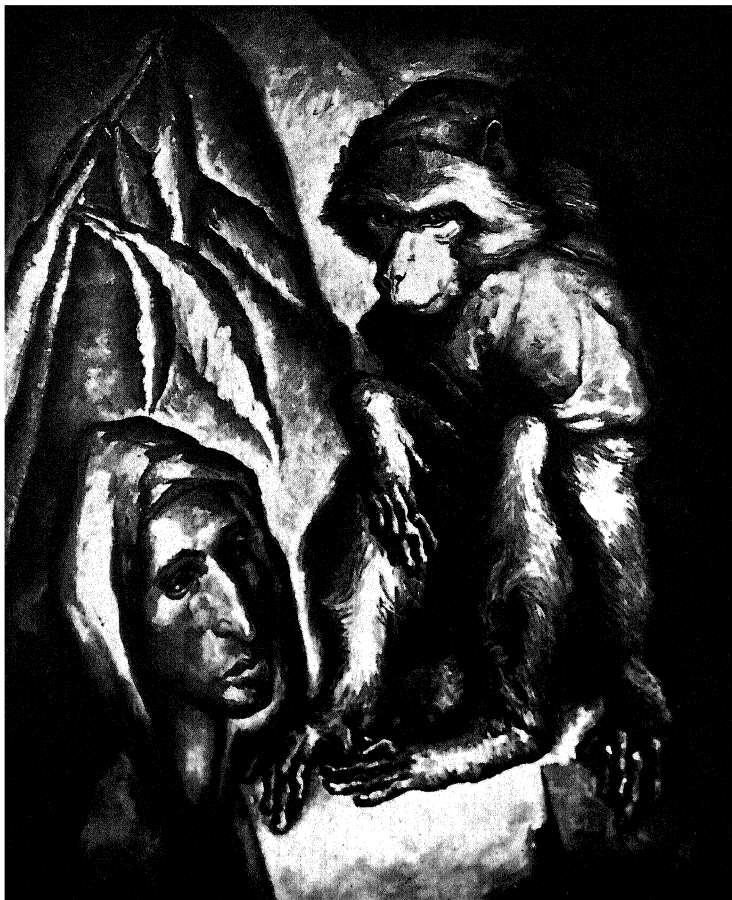
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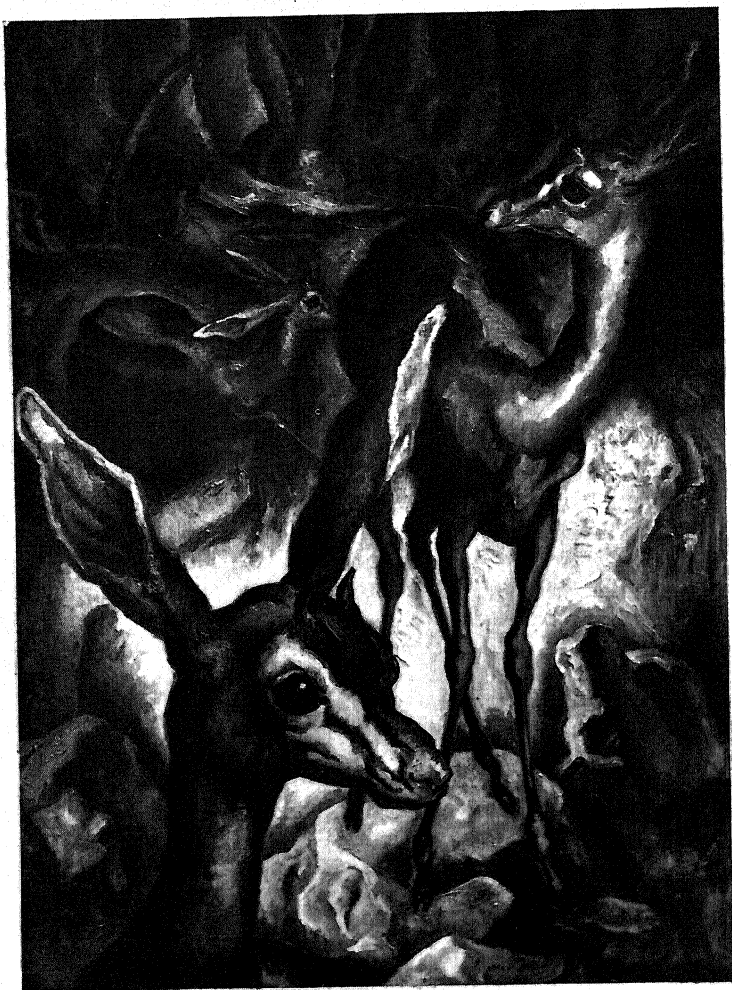


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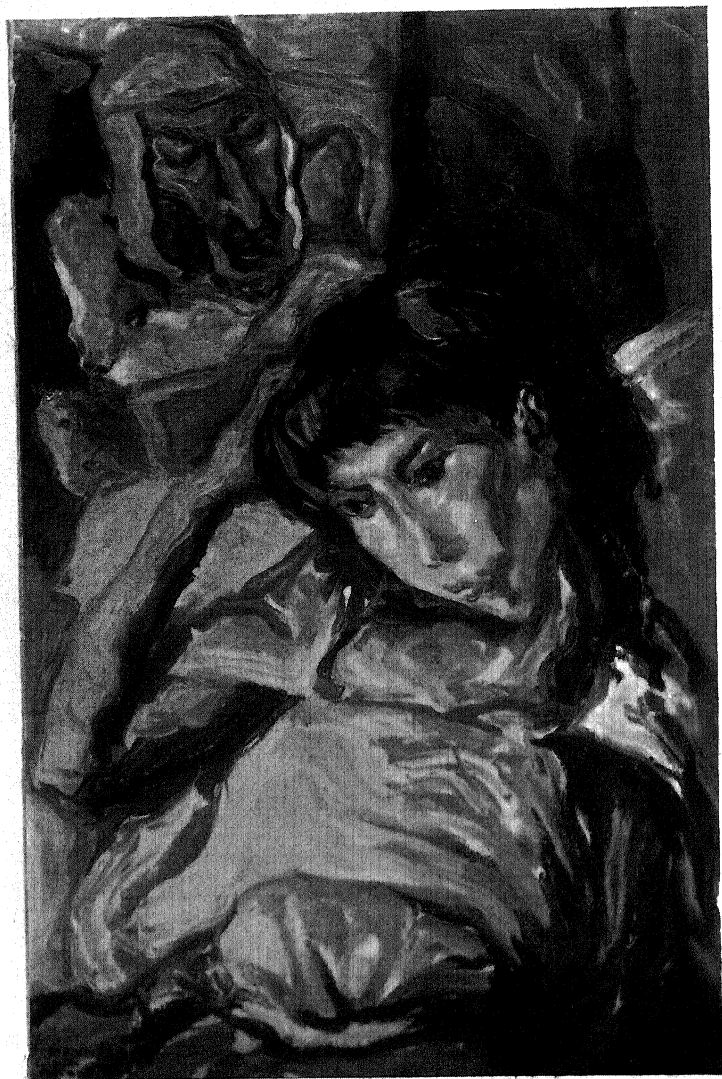
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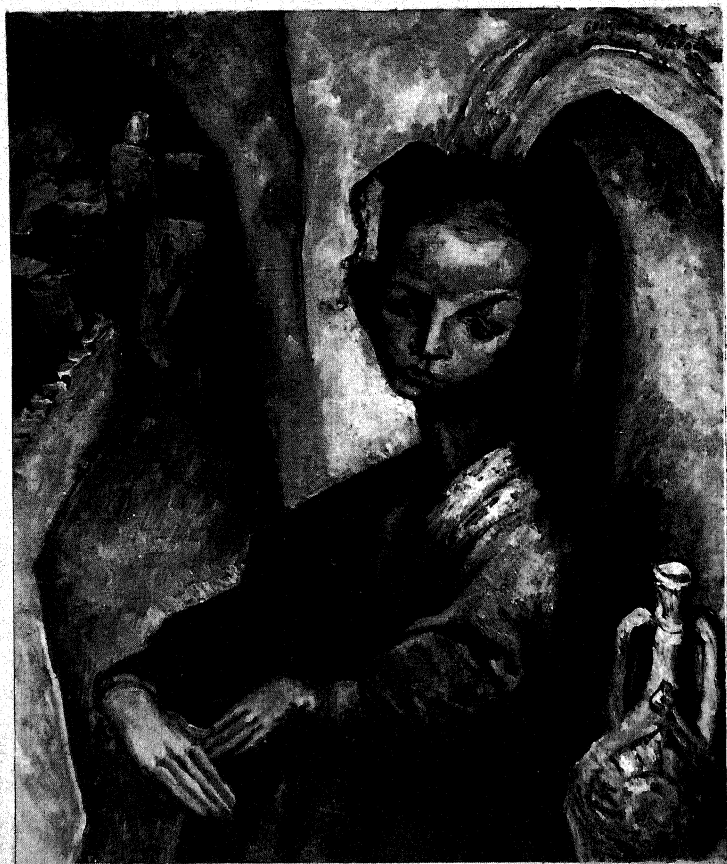
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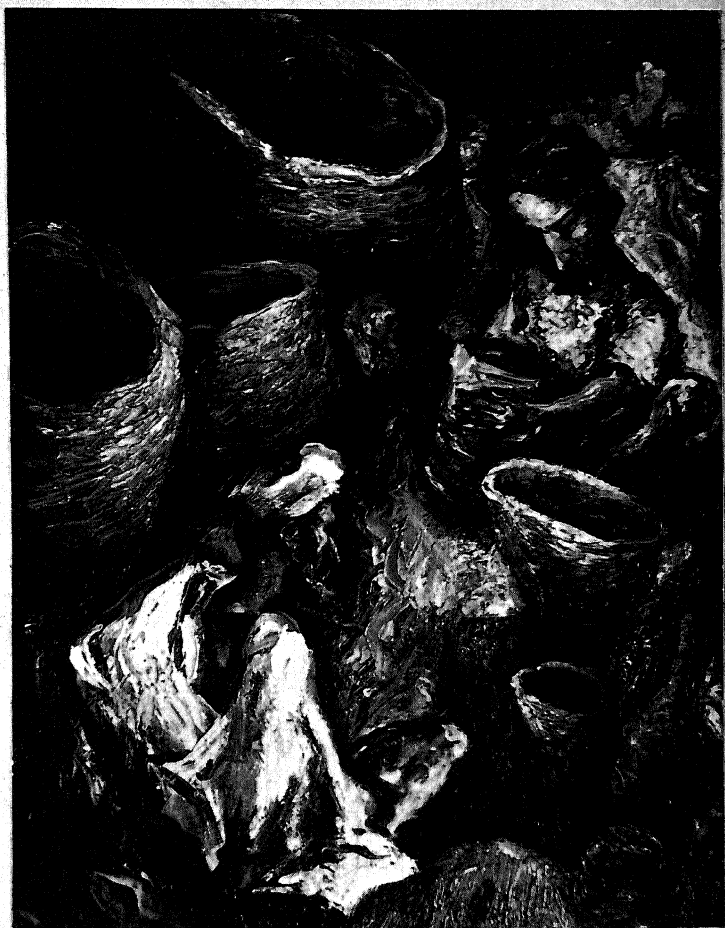
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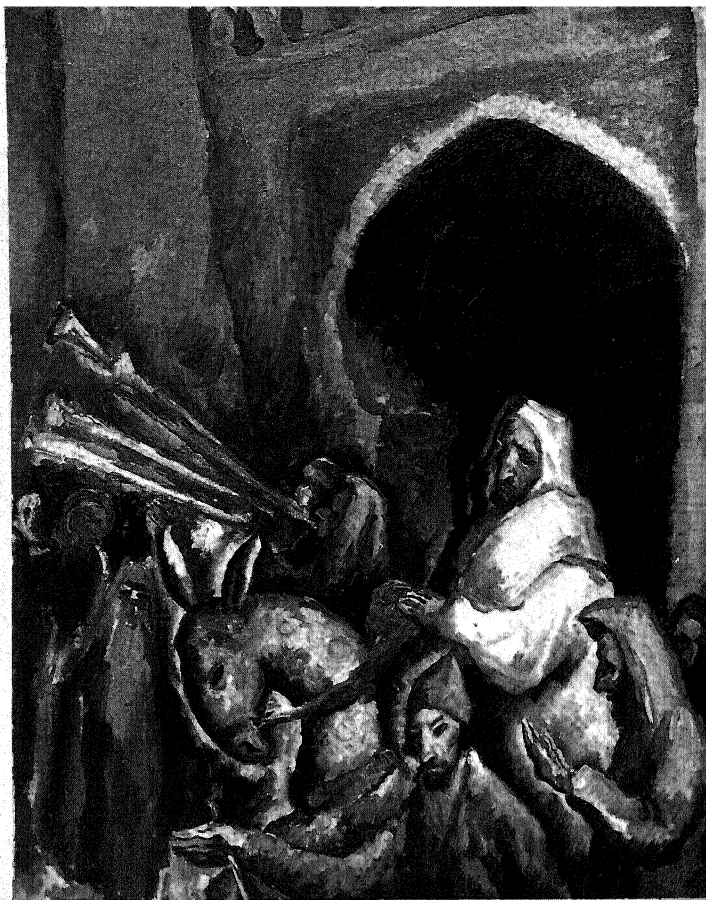


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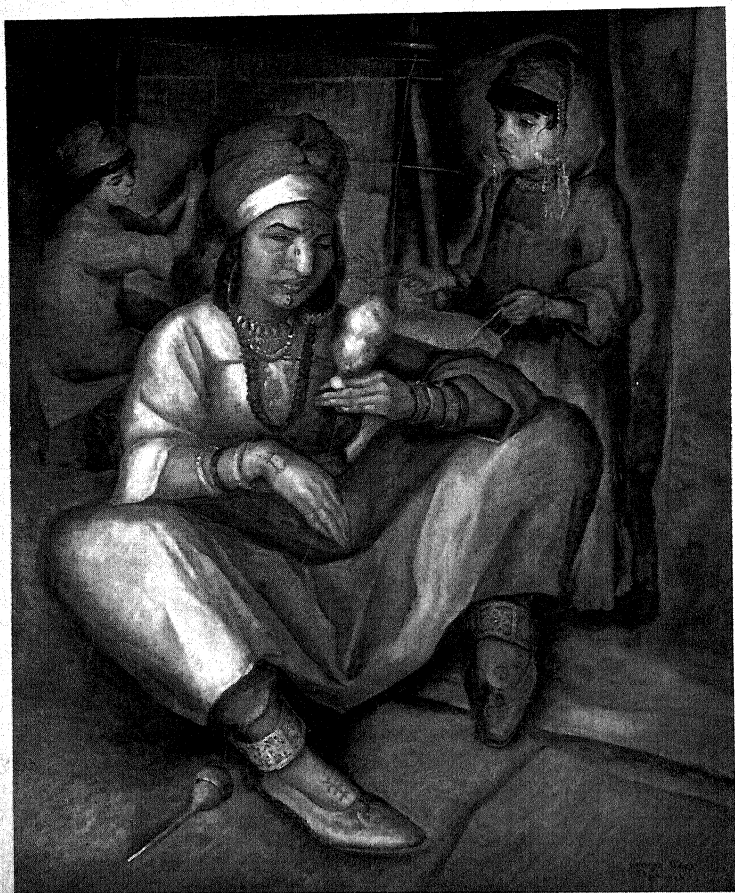


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